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Radiation Shields Are Guarding U.S. Embassy in Moscow

From News Services

With shields said to be going up — or already in place — over windows of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, the State Department today was reported seeking a Soviet explanation of claimed microwave radiation bombardment of the U.S. facility.

"If it is true, it is a very serious situation," President Ford said yesterday while campaigning in New Hampshire. There have been conflicting assessments on whether

the radiation poses a health hazard.

The concern was triggered by discovery of unusually high levels of radiation in the Moscow embassy attributed to Soviet listening or jamming devices.

The 10-story, stucco-faced structure is a five-minute drive from the Kremlin and contains about 50 apartments as well as four floors of offices for the 125 embassy staff members.

THE STATE Department has re-

fused to comment on the subject, revealed over the weekend. First reports said that U.S. Ambassador Walter J. Stoessel Jr. warned embassy employees recently at a secret briefing that there might be a potential medical problem due to the high levels of radiation.

However, later reports said an embassy doctor was assuring callers that no medical problem exists.

A source said embassy officials became concerned about high radiation levels in December and tried to pin down what caused them. He said the investigation was complicated by the fact that the embassy is surrounded by Soviet buildings, any of which might house whatever device causes the radiation. The investigation showed that the radiation was the result of Soviet electronic devices. "But how they're doing it and why they're doing it is still up in the air," the source said.

HE SAID that, although this was the first time high levels of radiation had been a problem at the Moscow embassy, the use of powerful electronic equipment is part of the game every side plays.

Both the United States and Soviet Union plan to build new embassy complexes in Moscow and Washington simultaneously, but construction has not started yet.

Although the situation has been known to American technical experts for a month or more, the United

States so far has received no satisfactory explanation, sources said. State Department officials involved in U.S.-Soviet relations have been instructed not to discuss the matter.

There has been speculation that the radiation is intended to activate hidden microphones in the embassy building, to interfere with the American antijamming devices, or — according to a more sinister explanation — to induce a state of lethargy or depression among U.S. diplomats.